

Hello Universe



By

Erin Entrada Kelly

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on three or four chapters of the novel and is comprised of the following activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include family/friendship, the value of being different, courage, personal growth, bullying, facing challenges, coming of age.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

Newbery Medalist Erin Entrada Kelly's *Hello, Universe* is a funny and poignant neighborhood story about unexpected friendships.

Told from four intertwining points of view—two boys and two girls—the novel celebrates bravery, being different, and finding your inner *bayani* (hero). “Readers will be instantly engrossed in this relatable neighborhood adventure and its eclectic cast of misfits.”- *Booklist*

In one day, four lives weave together in unexpected ways. Virgil Salinas is shy and kind-hearted and feels out of place in his crazy-about-sports family. Valencia Somerset, who is deaf, smart, brave, and secretly lonely, and she loves everything about nature. Kaori Tanaka is a self-proclaimed psychic, whose little sister, Gen, is always following her around. And Chet Bullens wishes the weird kids would just stop being so different so he can concentrate on basketball.

They aren't friends, at least not until Chet pulls a prank that traps Virgil and his pet guinea pig at the bottom of a well. This disaster leads Kaori, Gen, and Valencia on an epic quest to find missing Virgil. Through luck, smarts, bravery, and a little help from the universe, a rescue is performed, a bully is put in his place, and friendship blooms. (The Publisher)

Author Biography

Erin Entrada Kelly

Erin was raised in Louisiana, but now lives in the Philadelphia area. She is a professor of children's literature in the graduate fiction and publishing programs at Rosemont College, where she earned her MFA. Erin is also a short story writer. Her short fiction has been nominated for the [Philippines Free Press Literary Award for Short Fiction](#) and the Pushcart Prize. Erin has a bachelor's degree in women's studies and liberal arts from McNeese State University and an MFA in creative writing from Rosemont. www.erinentradakelly.com/bio/



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Chapters 1-4



Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. In the first four chapters of this novel we are introduced to three different characters, Virgil, Valencia and Kaori. It's likely that one of these characters will serve as the novel's main protagonist. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you've seen. What do you think makes for an interesting **protagonist**? (One that's hard to forget.)



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

posture	exception	attentive	monastery
maneuver	unison	obsession	notorious

1. Janie's _____ is the study of butterflies and moths.
2. My grandmother was always nagging me about my _____.
3. Father Clemens spent four years in a _____.
4. “Good morning, Miss Veronica,” the class said in _____.
5. John Dillinger was a _____ gangster of the 1930s.
6. The police officer executed a crafty _____ with his cruiser.
7. “I will not make an _____ to the school rules for you,” the principal warned.
8. Kelvin was so _____ in class I was sure he'd do well on the test.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story for most of Chapter One?

2. We are introduced to new characters in Chapters 1, 2 and 4. The title of Chapter 2, however, is the only chapter to bear the name of one of these characters. Why do you suppose the author thought it important to entitle the chapter *Valencia*?

3. Why did Virgil feel rather intimidated by his brothers?

4. Lola had come from Malaysia to live with Virgil's family. True or False

5. What do you think Virgil's secret was that made him a Grand Failure?

6. Which of the three main characters introduced so far (Virgil, Valencia and Kaori) do you find most interesting? Why does that person appeal to you in this way?

7. What was it that kept Valencia awake at night?

8. Match each character from these chapters with the most accurate description.

a	Virgil		1	Wild about soccer.
b	Valencia		2	A book-giver.
c	Kaori		3	Please speak a little louder.
d	Lola		4	Hungry for seven years.
e	Roberta		5	A notorious night owl.
f	Gulliver		6	Dreamed about the Stone Boy.
g	Dayapan		7	Had seven sisters.
h	Julius		8	A proud Gemini.
i	Gen		9	Turtle.
j	Ruby San Salvador		10	A guinea pig.

9. Briefly summarize Valencia's nightmare.

10. What was there about Virgil's two brothers that he considered a sign that something went wrong with them?

11. Kaori believes that she has second sight. What does it mean to have *second sight*?

12. Why did Kaori like to talk aloud when she was alone?

Language Activities



A. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first four chapters of *Hello Universe*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
glanced		Something a bell did.
finger		The edge of something.
downer		Awe.
wrong		Reach adulthood.
years		State once more.
notes		The beginning.
promise		A rude person.

Now find two additional words from the first four chapters which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

B. The Moon ~ A Quatrain Poem.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain was written by the famous poet, Robert Louis Stevenson. It is called, ***The Moon***.

*The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;
She shines on thieves on the garden wall,
On streets and fields and harbor quays,
And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A – A – B – B**. (*Quays* is pronounced **keys** in many English-speaking countries.) Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first four chapters of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

C. Personification is giving human qualities to something that is not human. The following example is taken from Chapter 1: ... *the Salina family was – big personalities that bubbled over like pots of soup.*



Describe how the Salinas family is personified in this example.

Create your own example of personification.

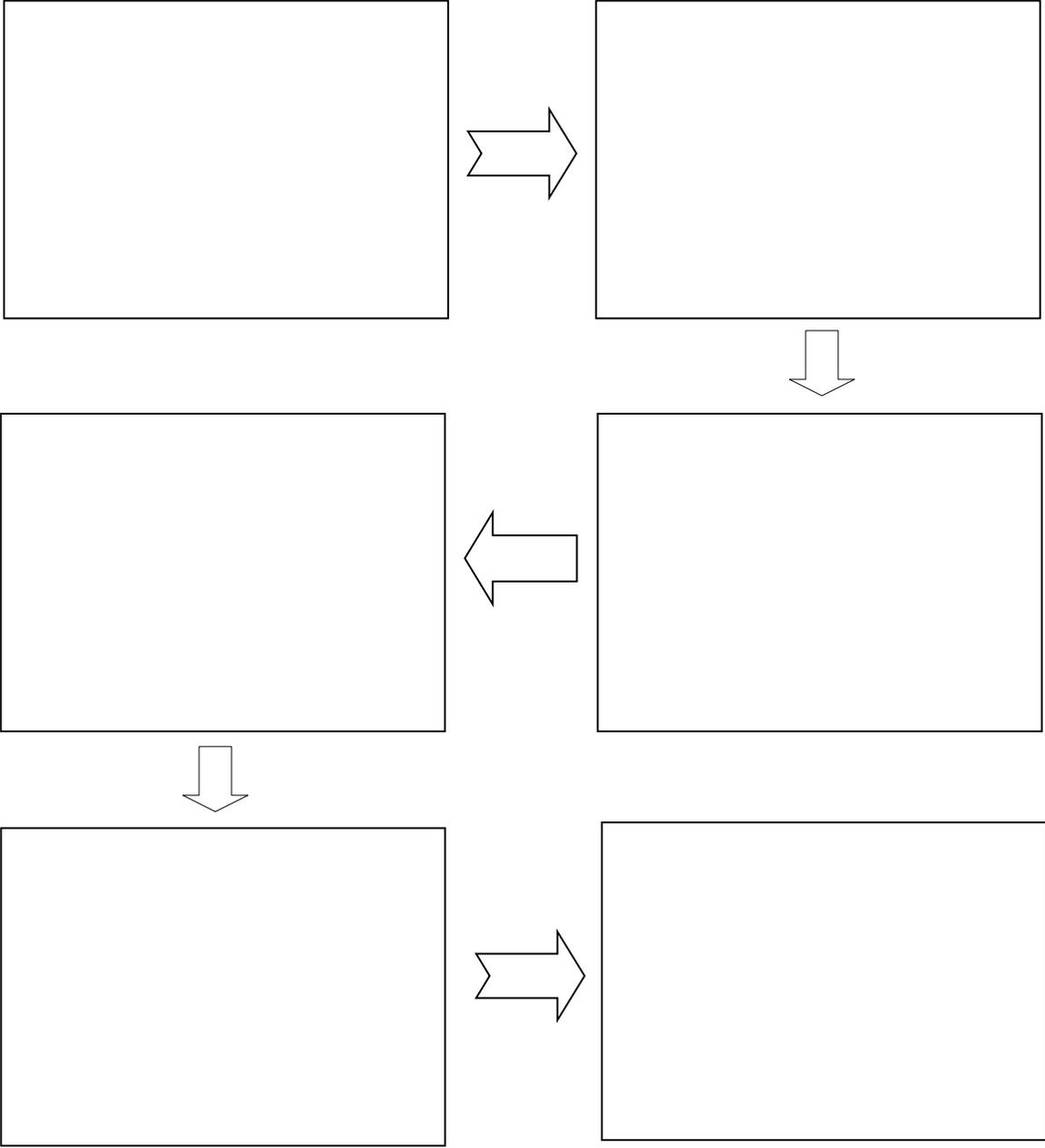
As you continue to read through the novel be on the lookout for other examples of this literary device. If you should find one, come back to this question and enter it below.

D. Valencia's nightmare in Chapter Two is a possible example of **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing is defined as *a warning or indication of a future event*. Valencia's nightmare concludes with her finding herself alone – the only person left on the face of the earth. If this nightmare is indeed an example of foreshadowing, predict how this nightmare might at least be partially fulfilled in Valencia's life.



E. Sequence Chart

Choose what you consider to be the six most important events in these chapters. In each of the six boxes below list the six events that you have chosen, describing what happened and telling why you consider this to be an essential part of the story.



Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene - or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in the first four chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6